



DEPARTMENT OF  
**PLANNING AND  
DEVELOPMENT  
REVIEW**

**Commission of Architectural Review**  
**Certificate of Appropriateness Application**  
900 E. Broad Street, Room 510  
Richmond, VA 23219  
804-646-6569

**Property** (location of work)

Property Address: 4204 Hermitage Road

Current Zoning: R-53

Historic District: Hermitage Road

Application is submitted for: (check one)

- ☒ Alteration  
☐ Demolition  
☒ New Construction

**Project Description** (attach additional sheets if needed):

The applicant requests conceptual review of modifications to an existing building, including the construction of a new rear addition. Please see attached narrative and conceptual renderings.

**Applicant/Contact Person:** Catherine Easterling

Company: Sadler & Whitehead

Mailing Address: 212 E. Grace Street

City: Richmond

State: VA

Zip Code: 23219

Telephone: (804) 231-5299

Email: catherine@sadlerandwhitehead.com

Billing Contact? Yes ☒ Applicant Type (owner, architect, etc.): Other ☒

**Property Owner:** Virginia Repertory Theater

If Business Entity, name and title of authorized signee: Klaus Schuller, Managing Director

Mailing Address: 114 West Broad Street

City: Richmond

State: VA

Zip Code: 23220

Telephone: (804) 282-2620

Email: kschuller@virginiarep.org

Billing Contact? No ☒

**\*\*Owner must sign at the bottom of this page\*\***

**Acknowledgement of Responsibility**

**Compliance:** If granted, you agree to comply with all conditions of the certificate of appropriateness (COA). Revisions to approved work require staff review and may require a new application and approval from the Commission of Architectural Review (CAR). Failure to comply with the conditions of the COA may result in project delays or legal action. The COA is valid for one (1) year and may be extended for an additional year, upon written request and payment of associated fee.

**Requirements:** A complete application includes all applicable information requested on checklists available on the CAR website to provide a complete and accurate description of existing and proposed conditions, as well as payments of the application fee. Applications proposing major new construction, including additions, should meet with staff to review the application and requirements prior to submitting. Owner contact information and signature is required. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

**Zoning Requirements:** Prior to Commission review, it is the responsibility of the applicant to determine if zoning approval is required. Application materials should be prepared in compliance with zoning.

Property Owner Signature: 

Date: 7/2/25

## 4204 Hermitage Road Conceptual Review

The former Scottish Rite Temple building at 4204 Hermitage Road is located at the north end of the Hermitage Road City Old and Historic District. Currently owned by the Virginia Repertory Theatre, the property has been marketed for sale for an extended period of time. Richmond BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, a spiritual, volunteer-driven fellowship, is currently in a due diligence period as they explore the possibility of purchasing the property and adapting it for use as a Mandir - a traditional Hindu house of worship.

Constructed in 1969, the property is currently a non-contributing building in the Hermitage Road National Register Historic District. Because of its non-contributing status, BAPS Richmond requests high-level conceptual review of several modifications to the property to allow the building to reflect the Hindu architectural tradition and values of the Mandir. The *Shilpa Shāstras*, sacred Hindu texts, regulate the design and symbology of the Mandir, and while many of the conceptual modifications to the building can be adjusted based on Commission feedback, many of the alterations are necessary for the adaptive reuse of the building as a temple.

BAPS Richmond welcomes the Commission's feedback regarding the appropriateness of these changes. BAPS Richmond understands that the information supplied in the application is schematic. Should the organization move forward with the purchase of the property, they welcome an opportunity to submit more detailed drawings for Commission consideration.

The enclosed conceptual renderings reference the following proposed concepts:

### **SIGNAGE**

The site previously had a monumental sign at the front of the building identifying it as the Scottish Rite Temple. This sign was removed by the present owner, but is still visible in Google Streetview images (enclosed). The applicant proposes installing a new, freestanding stone or cast concrete sign in a similar location. In accordance with the *Guidelines*, the sign will be appropriately scaled to the building and will utilize colors and materials compatible with the characteristics of the existing building and historic district. The sign will not obstruct important views to the building and will not be internally illuminated. The new sign will be spot lit.

The applicant also proposes removing existing signage near the one-story ca. 1991 addition at the south side of the building and replacing it with a new sign similar to the one proposed for the Hermitage Road elevation.

### **EXISTING BUILDING FEATURES**

Cornice and Roofline:

The applicant's primary concern is the presence of Scottish Rite Temple symbols at the cornice, including regularly-spaced double-headed **eagle medallions**. As these symbols reflect a different religious tradition, BAPS Richmond requests the opportunity to replace them with **Akshar Deri symbols** that reflect the Hindu religious tradition. The new symbols would be similarly spaced and scaled to remain compatible with the existing building. Additionally, the applicant requests

**decorative cresting** along the rooflines, including the roofline of the fly tower. The cresting is a subtle way of introducing traditional Hindu architectural design while respecting the existing building's color palette, materials, and horizontal emphasis. The applicant would also like Commission feedback regarding a more prominent intervention: **new rooftop canopies** at the corners of the building. These new canopies would be appropriately scaled so as not to detract from the horizontal emphasis of the existing building design. The new canopies would have a color and material palette compatible with the building and the historic district.

### **FRONT ENTRANCE**

The existing building has a front entrance with four metal-framed doors set within pointed-arch windows set within a cast concrete frame. The applicant intends to preserve the entrance with one modification. BAPS Richmond would like to change the window arch to a rounded design that is highly important in the Hindu architectural tradition. This proposed change is subtle and would have little impact on the overall building.

### **COLUMNS**

The existing building has distinctive, cast concrete columns with slender shafts and flared capitals. These columns are not engaged with the masonry walls, but support a wide entablature with a deep eave. The applicant would appreciate feedback concerning the appropriateness of modifications to the existing columns. The applicant understands that the spacing of the columns is important to the overall design of the building, and BAPS Richmond does not intend to demolish any of the existing columns. If acceptable, the applicant would like to wrap the existing columns with a reversible treatment that allows each column to read as a more traditional Mandir column, a component critical in Hindu architecture. This treatment extends to the lower one-story 1991 addition at the south side of the building.

The applicant is also interested in knowing whether or not the addition of a garland feature between each column would be acceptable. Materials for the column wraps and garlands will be fiber reinforced polymer (FRP), with a high strength-to-weight ratio, and the applicant will provide additional information during future Commission reviews. Renderings showing column modifications with and without the garlands are enclosed for Commission consideration.

### **UNPAINTED BRICK MASONRY**

The existing building features unpainted, Flemish bond brick panels behind each column and textured brick panels in the open bays between columns. The *Guidelines* advise against painting unpainted masonry. The applicant is interested in knowing if there is any flexibility concerning this guideline in light of the building being non-contributing within the historic district. If the red brick masonry were to be painted, the applicant would select a light, neutral paint color compatible with the stucco colors found throughout the historic district.

The applicant believes the proposed modifications to existing non-historic building elements is done in a manner that respects the scale, colors, and materials present throughout the historic district, and reflects the unique characteristics of this large, anomalous, and non-contributing building at the edge of the Hermitage Road Historic District.

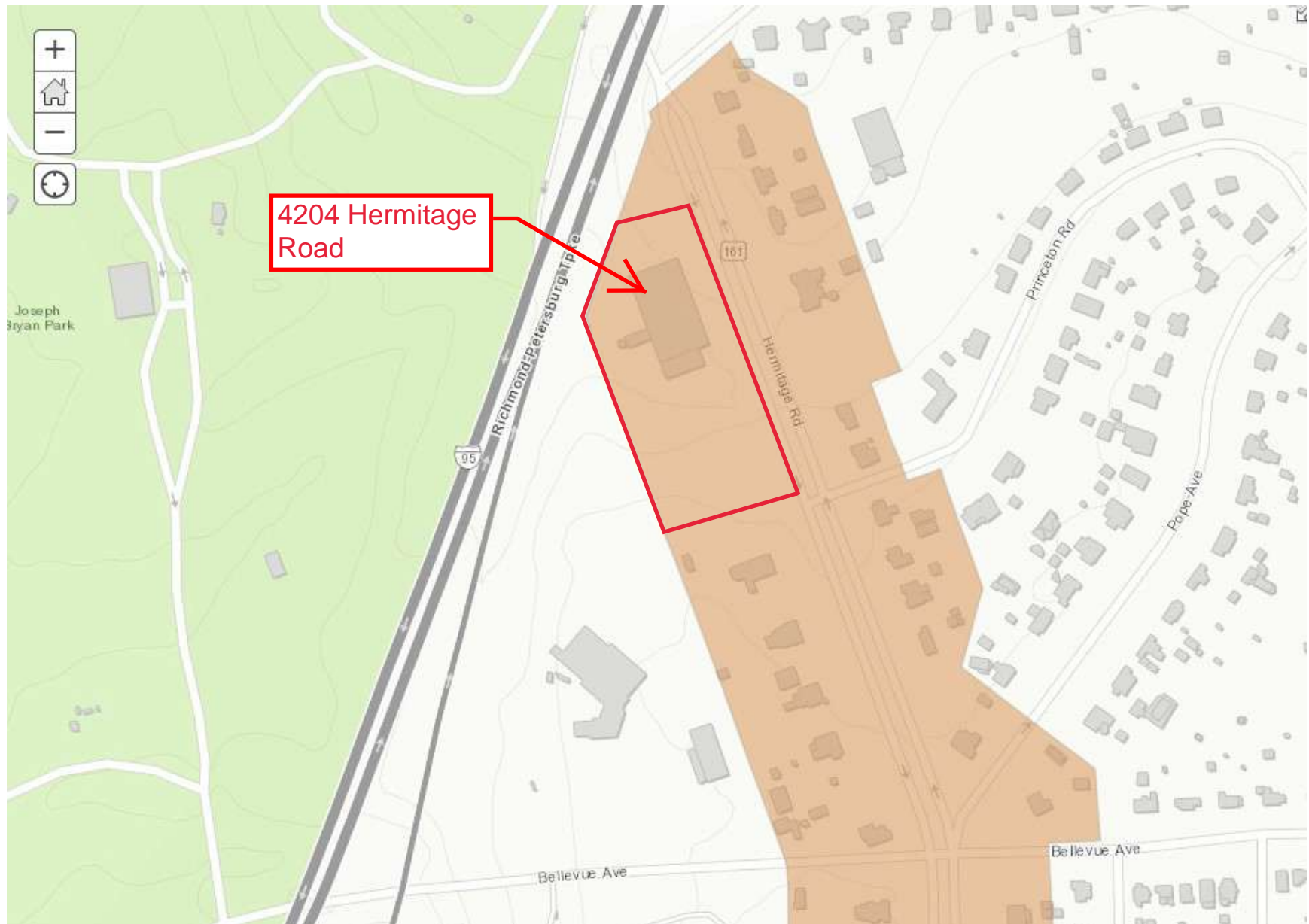
## **NEW ADDITION**

A new addition at the rear of the building will serve as a worship hall and a gymnasium for the Mandir. The addition will be visible from the interstate highway. Additionally, the new construction will be minimally visible from Bellevue Avenue. Most of the 1969 Scottish Rite Temple building is screened from view along Bellevue Avenue by vegetation, an additional Scottish Rite building to the southwest of the property, and outbuildings. A small corner of the new addition will likely be visible from the public sidewalk near the south end of the building. The new addition will have almost no visual impact on the Hermitage Road Historic District.

In accordance with the *Guidelines*, the new addition will be subordinate to the main building and will be located in the most inconspicuous portion of the site. See enclosed site plan showing the footprint of the new addition in relation to the existing building. The new addition is subordinate to the 1969 building in height and massing. Its regular rectangular form respects the form and massing of the existing building. It will be inset from the south side of the building to further reduce impact. A two-story glass hyphen will likely connect the new addition to the existing building. The colors and materials for the new addition will reference the cast concrete features used on the existing building. The solid, neutral color is compatible with the stucco buildings found in and around the historic district.

Traditional Hindu Mandir elements will be incorporated into the design of the rear addition, including a large entry stair and a Shikhar – the mountain-like pinnacles in front of the entrance to the new worship hall.





Property shown in the context of the Hermitage Road Historic District



CAR July 2025 Conceptual Review for 4204 Hermitage Road



1. Google Streetview from Hermitage Road northbound lane



2. Google Streetview image looking north along Hermitage





3. View from Hermitage Road sidewalk



4. Front entrance





5. Medallion detail

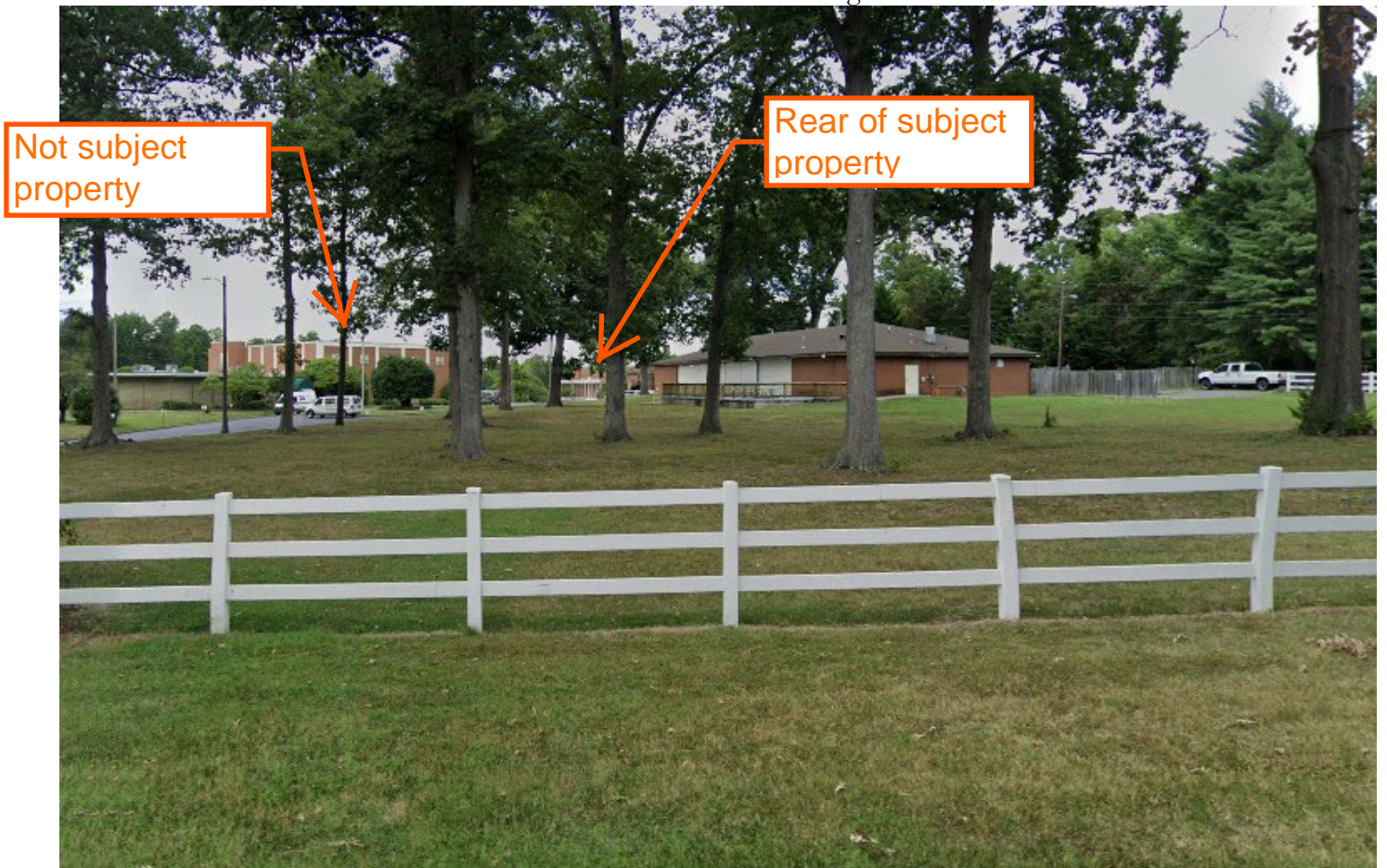


6. Column detail



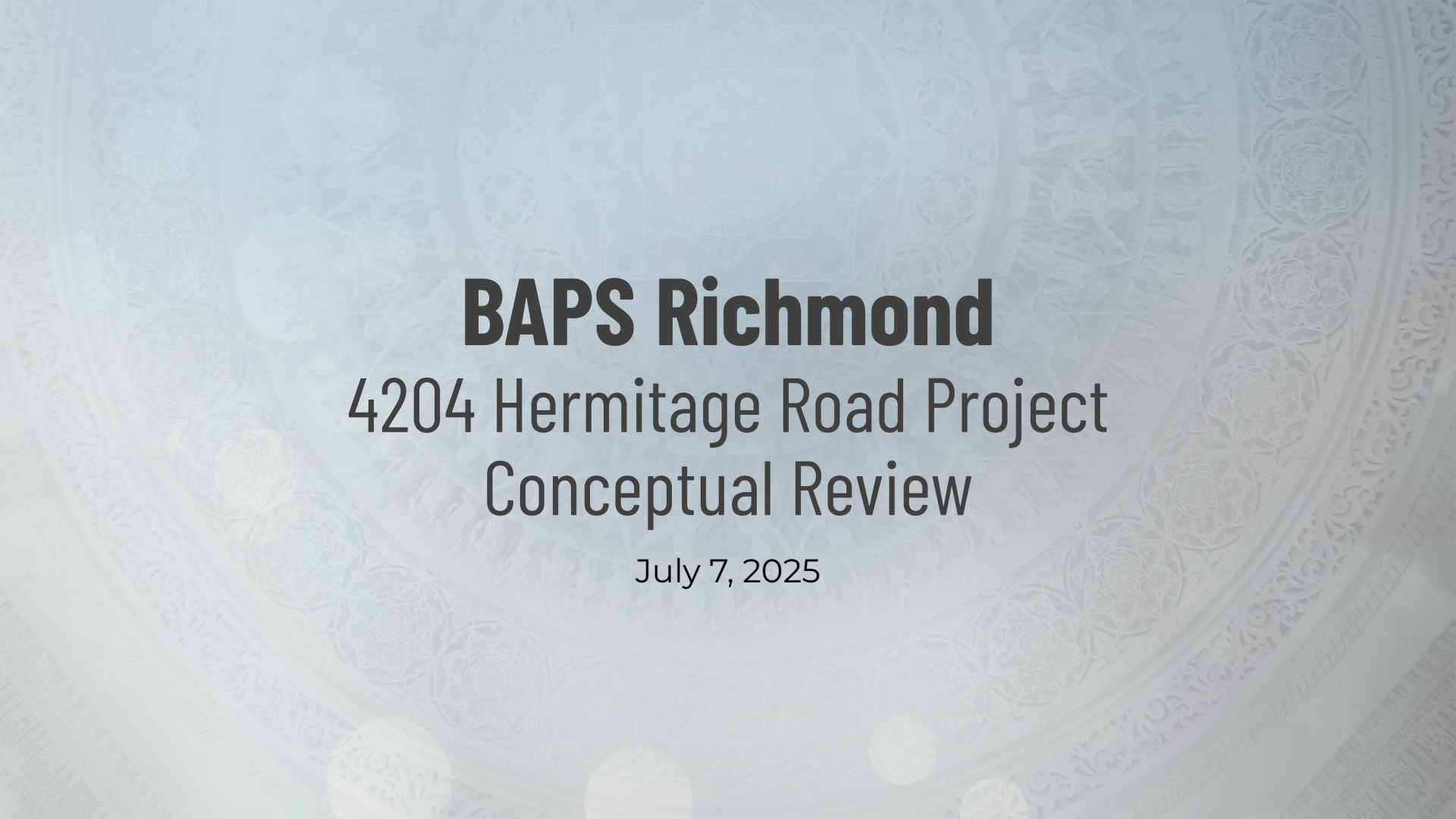


7. North side of building



8. View from Bellevue Avenue





# **BAPS Richmond**

## 4204 Hermitage Road Project

### Conceptual Review

July 7, 2025

# MEETING AGENDA

- 01** Introductions
- 02** About BAPS
- 03** Proposals

# About BAPS

BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha is a **spiritual, volunteer-driven fellowship** dedicated to **improving society** through individual growth by fostering the Hindu values of **faith, service** and global **harmony**.

**Since 2006, BAPS Richmond has been deeply rooted in the city's cultural and spiritual fabric.**







# Proposals

## Front Entrance - Hermitage Road (Our Proposal)

We'd like to put our signage







**Front Entrance (Current Look)**

Hermitage Road



## Front Entrance - Hermitage Road (Our Proposal)

Traditional **symbols** along both levels of roof faces

**Covering Radiating patterns** for consistency between both roof faces





Update to **Rounded arch windows**, instead of pointed arch windows



Addition of **patterned roof trims** along both roof lines





**Canopy** on the corners of main level roof of bldg 1 (4) and bldg 2 (2)



Addition of **columns** across the entire building





Addition of **garland arches** between columns along the entire building



**Rear Entrance - (Current Look)**

Across from the parking lot





Traditional symbols, columns, garland arches, canopy, and roof trim patterns





## Rear Entrance - (Our Proposal)

Addition of **columns on the bottom level** to match the overall building



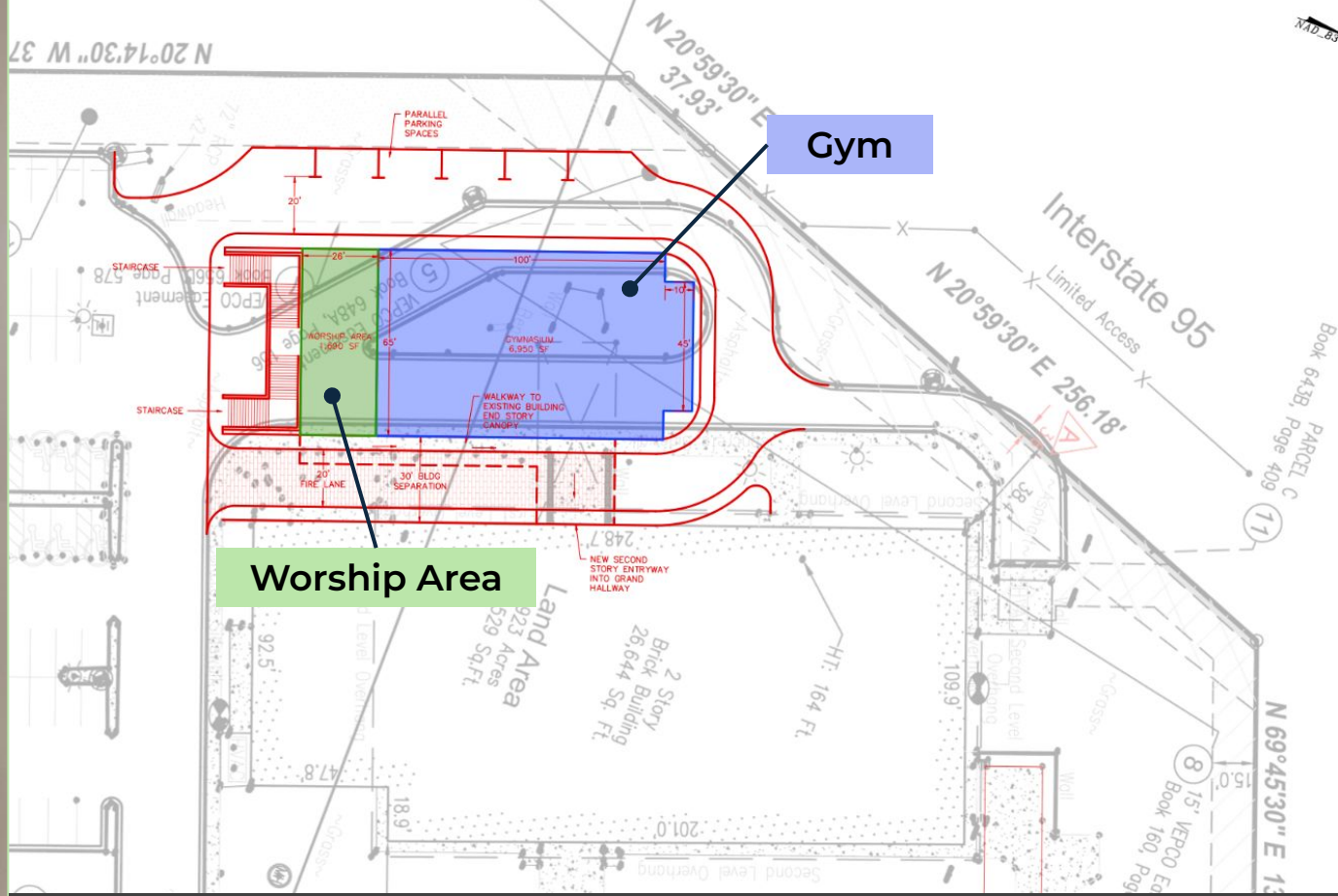


Traditional symbols, columns, arches, mini canopy, and roof trim patterns & **signage**



New structure parallel to current bldg with **prayer hall** and **gymnasium**





## New building - (Our Proposal)

65 ft x 126 ft (not including stairs)





# THANK YOU

BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Richmond VA

